

5. Empire begins at home:

Local elites and imperial ideologies in Hellenistic Greece and Babylonia

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Introduction

εἰς ταῦτὸ συνενεγκῶν τὰ πανταχόθεν ... πατρίδα μὲν τὴν οἰκουμένην προσέταξεν ἡγεῖσθαι πάντας, ἀκρόπολιν δὲ καὶ φρουρὰν τὸ στρατόπεδον, συγγενεῖς δὲ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς, ἄλλοφύλους δὲ τοὺς πονηροὺς.

[Alexander] brought together all regions into a single domain ... He instructed all men to consider the whole inhabited world as their fatherland, his camp as its stronghold and garrison, all good men as their kinsmen, and all wicked men as foreigners.¹

For a brief historical moment, Alexander the Great created an empire which, by the standards of the day, was truly global: it spanned most of the known world, surpassed the territorial reach of all previous imperial formations, linked Europe and Asia, and united under a single ruler areas from Greece to Afghanistan. This short-lived world empire rapidly fragmented after Alexander's death, but the Graeco-Macedonian conquest and settlement of the Near East had forever altered the structure of the *oikoumenē*. Although what we call the Hellenistic world consisted not of a single empire but a set of interlocking kingdoms, these were connected by a number of important shared features: a common genesis, the diasporic Greco-Macedonian communities scattered across them all, and sociopolitical and cultural structures exported from the "old" Greek world. All this created what Rostovtzeff called "the unity and homogeneity of the Hellenistic world from the point of view of civilisation and mode of life."² Moreover, at least in the early Hellenistic period, each of the successor dynasties nurtured the hope of reconquering the whole of Alexander's empire, and rulers presented their own domains in globalizing or universalizing terms, further contributing to the idea of a single world to be won. In the Hellenistic world we have at once the sense of a single vast space – unified by Macedonian imperialism, Hellenic culture and the interaction of both with an array of subject cultures – and

¹ Plut. *De Alex.* 1.6.

² Rostovtzeff 1941: 1040.

the reality of a network of competing kingdoms and independent states fighting for supremacy and survival.

How did different Hellenistic local elites experience and negotiate their place in this world of competing “global” empires, and how did imperial elites manage cultural difference to gain and foster their cooperation? As a contribution to the exploration of such questions, this chapter examines a phenomenon which would be opposed to cosmopolitanism on most definitions of the term,³ arguing that it helped to naturalize empire and maintain the cooperation of culturally disparate elites in the same way as universalist ideologies in other imperial contexts. That phenomenon is localism. Through a case study of selected documents produced by local elites in Babylonia and the Greek world, I will argue that the ways in which the different individuals and groups construct imperial identities for their local audiences (and themselves) are similar. Writing both themselves and contemporary empires into local histories which stretch back to the distant past, these elites represent the imperial present as a continuation of the glorious past of their own community, and themselves as the latest in a long line of noble guardians of that community. Thus, they use time rather than space to elide cultural and ethnic difference, and localism rather than universalism to naturalize the experience of contemporary imperialism.

I will further suggest that the similarities between these representations across the two cultures examined, and the extent to which they are sanctioned or supported by ruling powers, reflect

³ In the extensive modern sociological and anthropological literature on cosmopolitanism, definitions of the term vary considerably (for a useful summary of the main strands, see the introduction to Delanty 2012), but tend to cluster around the philosophical idea of a truly global community defined in moral and/or political terms: e.g., “Cosmopolitanism elaborates a concern with the equal moral status of each and every human being and creates a bedrock of interest in what it is that human beings have in common” (Held 2010: x); “Cosmopolitanism ... is centrally concerned with political themes ... and affiliation to some sort of political structure that putatively covers the whole cosmos” (Inglis and Robertson 2011: 297). Such definitions are hard to apply to imperial ideologies designed to express and/or promote subjects’ allegiance to a specific imperial formation. Consequently, as the editors of this volume observe, “cosmopolitanism” in this sense is not particularly helpful for thinking about elite self-definition and imperial ideologies in the ancient world, particularly before the advent of Rome. Throughout this chapter I therefore follow their definition of cosmopolitanism as designating “a complex of practices and theories that enabled certain individuals not only to cross cultural boundaries, but also to establish an enduring normative framework across them” (Lavan, Payne and Weisweiler, this volume).

not just the particular priorities of separate local groups in the Hellenistic world, but something about Hellenistic imperialism itself. Hellenistic rulers did not simply tolerate but actively participated in the process of casting themselves in local cultural idioms and writing their empires into local histories. The localist ideologies expressed in the documents we will examine do not show us a failed attempt at cultural integration on the part of the imperial center; rather, they are likely to reflect a coherent policy. Investing in the continuation of local cultures was a means of gaining local support, but also of creating a relatively closed imperial elite and reducing the likelihood of large-scale rebellions. Encouraging the reproduction of cultural differences in western Asia effectively discouraged the adoption of the linguistic and cultural tools (in this case, Greek) necessary to become part of the transregional governing elite, while encouraging localism in the Greek world might decrease the chance of a united Greek rebellion against Macedonian rule. To use the terminology formulated by the editors of this volume, the case of these Hellenistic elites offers us an example of the subordinating mode of elite integration – at least, from the imperial perspective.⁴ From the perspective of the elites concerned, however, it was arguably more a case of assimilation: the assimilation of the imperial to the local.

Hellenistic empires: Babylonian perspectives

How did Babylonian local elites represent themselves under Seleucid rule? Any attempt to answer this question is fraught with problems, because of the state of the surviving sources from Seleucid Mesopotamia. A number of caveats are therefore in order. First, we are missing the majority of the source record altogether. The inhabitants of the region spoke Aramaic, and increasingly Greek, with the latter functioning as the language of Seleucid administration. These languages were typically written on leather or papyrus, which have not been preserved due to climatic conditions in the region. Apart from a few inscriptions on stone or clay, everything in Aramaic or Greek is lost, and with it much of the social, economic and cultural history of Seleucid Mesopotamia.

What do survive are thousands of clay tablets and fragments, inscribed in cuneiform script with texts in Akkadian and Sumerian – the ancient spoken languages of the region, which in this period survived as written languages of scholarship and liturgy.⁵ These languages, and the cuneiform script, were known and used by a small and shrinking circle of specialists connected

⁴ See Lavan, Payne and Weisweiler, this volume.

⁵ On the cuneiform sources from late first-millennium Uruk and Babylon, see Clancier 2009 and 2011; for Hellenistic Mesopotamia as a whole, Oelsner 1986 is still the best overall survey.

with the Mesopotamian temples. The cuneiform sources, therefore, derive from a restricted social context, and while they sometimes provide insight into broader political, economic, and cultural phenomena, they give us access first and foremost to the world of a small, elite group. They are also restricted in their geographical distribution, with only two Babylonian cities – Babylon in the north, and Uruk in the south – so far yielding large numbers of tablets from the Hellenistic period. Although the cuneiform sources shed welcome light on what would otherwise be a forbidding expanse of darkness, it is crucial to remember that it is a narrow and fitful beam.

A further difficulty for those who wish to use the cuneiform sources as a window onto the sociocultural history of Hellenistic Babylonia is the conservatism of cuneiform scholarship. Much of cuneiform scholars' activity in the later first millennium centered on the recopying and interpretation of core texts, while new compositions tended to follow traditional formats. Such texts often express archaic or archaizing conceptions which are hard to relate to their first-millennium context. For example, as Francis Joannès has demonstrated, many literary cuneiform texts of the first millennium BC display 'une vision de l'Ouest stéréotypée, volontiers archaisante'.⁶ Most of the cuneiform sources from Hellenistic Babylonia are highly traditional, showing strong continuity with earlier periods and little sign of direct engagement with the changing world outside the temples. It is difficult to determine how scholars related these compositions and their contents to the contemporary context – or whether they did so at all. The same difficulty arises with the area of first-millennium cuneiform scholarship which does show major innovation: the study of the heavens. The rise of mathematical astronomy and personal astrology in the later first millennium may well represent in some way a response to the sociopolitical shifts Babylonia experienced under foreign rule,⁷ but this is hard to demonstrate in any concrete sense.

Yet this does not mean that the local elites of Babylonia refused to engage with the contemporary realities of imperial rule and spent their time gazing at the stars or poring over crumbling tablets containing the wisdom of former generations. Although the bulk of the cuneiform documentation from the Hellenistic period relates to the traditional domains of

⁶ Joannès 1997: 142.

⁷ On Babylonian astronomy and astrology in the later first millennium and their relationship to broader intellectual and cultural contexts, see Rochberg 1993; Steele 2011 (astronomy); Rochberg 2004: chs. 3–4 (astrology); Brown 2000, Rochberg 2011 (both). Hunger and Pingree 1999 provides a more overarching overview of the development of Mesopotamian celestial scholarship.

cuneiform scholarship, the new celestial sciences, or the economic life of the temples and their functionaries, a significant minority of texts show us the priestly elites of Babylonia, or at least certain individuals within them, actively engaging with the imperial present. Furthermore, even compositions which on the surface are heavily conservative may articulate contemporary concerns; several studies have shown how a number of apparently antiquarian cuneiform texts from Uruk can be seen to respond to an early Seleucid context.⁸ We shall look at two such texts later, while in the next chapter Johannes Haubold examines how Berossos, a Babylonian writing in Greek, used his account of the Neo-Babylonian empire to articulate a model of elite interaction with strong resonances for the Seleucid period.⁹

To begin with more explicit engagement, however, the priestly elite of Seleucid Babylon certainly acknowledged that they were part of an empire which stretched from the Mediterranean to central Asia. Despite the archaizing geographical terms and conceptions of many first millennium cuneiform texts, precise references to contemporary political geography appear in the Chronicles and Astronomical Diaries. The Chronicles are a somewhat heterogeneous group of documents which record selected historical events, focusing on the actions of kings and/or religious praxis in Babylon or other Babylonian cities, while the Diaries are daily records of celestial phenomena which include reports of selected terrestrial phenomena – again, with a strong focus on the royal house and local cult.¹⁰ Nearly all the Diaries, and the surviving Chronicles from the later first millennium, come from Babylon.¹¹

The Hellenistic Chronicles and Diaries regularly refer to movements of people and goods across and beyond the Seleucid empire. One Chronicle from 281 BC describes Seleucus I marching his forces from Babylonia to Sardis and then making them cross the Mediterranean to “the land of

⁸ Beaulieu 1992 and 1995b, Cavigneaux 2005, Lenzi 2008.

⁹ Haubold, this volume.

¹⁰ On the Astronomical Diaries, see further Sachs and Hunger 1988: 20–36, Rochberg 2011, and Pirngruber 2013; on the Chronicles, see Grayson 1975, Drews 1975, Glassner 2005, Waerzeggers 2012.

¹¹ As shown by Waerzeggers 2012, the Late Babylonian Chronicles, although unprovenanced, almost certainly come from Babylon; those from the Neo-Babylonian period most probably derive from Borsippa.

Macedon (Akk. *Makkadunu*), his land".¹² The movement of ruler and troops from the traditional Babylonian heartland to the western periphery of Makkadunu, which is first attested in Hellenistic texts and explicitly presented here as the homeland of the new dynasty, highlights the territorial reach of the Seleucid scepter and of the imperial system to which Babylonia now belonged. The next entry in the Chronicle shifts to the eastern edge of the empire, recording something – possibly the arrival of troops or resources – “from the land of Bactria”.¹³ The huge distances covered in these juxtaposed reports underscore both the size and connectedness of the Seleucid empire, which also emerge with particular vividness in the following report from an Astronomical Diary relating to 273-272 BC:

That year, the king left his [...], his wife and a famous official in the land of Sardis to strengthen the guard. He went to Transpotamia (the province west of the Euphrates) against the troops of Egypt which were encamped in Transpotamia, and the troops of Egypt withdrew before him. Month XII, the 24th day, the satrap of Babylonia brought out much silver, cloth, goods, and utensils⁷ from Babylon and Seleucia, the royal city, and 20 elephants, which the satrap of Bactria had sent to the king, to Transpotamia before the king. That month, the general gathered the troops of the king, which were in Babylonia, from beginning to end, and went to the aid of the king in month I to Transpotamia.¹⁴

The sweeping geographical coverage and the interlocking journeys of king, satrap, army and elephants between Sardis, Babylonia and Bactria convey a sense of a connected imperial space covering much of the known world. But how far did the scholars who described this imperial structure identify with it?

As we shall see, based on the surviving Akkadian sources the answer is ‘partially’. While acknowledging their status as Seleucid subjects, the priests and scholars of Babylonia do not present themselves as a part of a transregional Seleucid imperial elite. Rather, they construct an image of the Seleucid empire in Babylonian-centric terms. Of course, these Akkadian texts were aimed at local audiences; it is possible that in interactions with the imperial authorities, or even in different contexts locally, the same individuals laid claim to a broader ‘imperial’ elite identity.

¹² *BCHP* 9 obv. 3’-4’; rev. 1’-3’. Of course, Seleucus never reached Macedon, as he was assassinated by Ptolemy Keraunos in Thrace; his death is also noted in the Chronicle.

¹³ *BCHP* 9 rev. 8’. There is a break before and after *šá KUR Ba-aḥ-tar* (‘from the land of Bactria’), but it is likely that the movement of resources is at issue – perhaps elephants, which are recorded as being sent by the satrap of Bactria to the Seleucid king Antiochus I in an Astronomical Diary relating to 273-272 BC (*AD* -273B rev. 31’-32’; see below).

¹⁴ *AD* -273B rev. 29’-32’.

The group of Macedonian-style burials near Uruk from the third century BC indicate that certain elite individuals in southern Babylonia adopted elements of Seleucid court style.¹⁵ But in the surviving Akkadian texts, these men stress their local identity and the interactions of their *own* city with the ruling power instead of constructing a broader “Babylonian” or “Seleucid” elite identity. While acknowledging the empire’s geographical realities and the ethnic background of its rulers, they assimilate them to Babylonian imperial models and structures from the past. These points could be illustrated from various Hellenistic cuneiform texts, but here I will focus on two, from the southern Babylonian city of Uruk.

Anu-uballit/Kephalon, restorer of the Rēš temple

The first is an Akkadian building inscription attested on several bricks from the Rēš, Uruk’s main temple in the late first millennium BC. This inscription records restorations made to the sanctuary in the late third or early second century BC by a local official named Anu-uballit:¹⁶

Anu-uballit ša šumšu šanû Keplunnu māru ša Anu-balāssu-iqbi rab ša rēš āli ša Uruk Enamena papāḥ Anu u Egašanana bīta ša Antu ša Rēš ša ina maḥri Uan [...] ipuššu iteniḥma aqqurma ina Nisanni u₄ 2-kām mu 1 me 10-kām ana muḥḥi bulṭu ša Anti’kusu šar mātāti bēliya temennašunu labirūtu’ urappišma u gaššašunu addi ēpušma bītānu ušaklil ina Maḥdaru² šadû dannu ušēšamma ušallilšunūti dalāt erēni dannūti ina bāb ša papāḥišunu uretti.

Anu-uballit, whose other name is Kephalon, son of Anu-balāssu-iqbi, rab ša rēš āli of Uruk. Enamenna, the shrine of Anu, and Egašanana, the shrine of Antu, in the Rēš temple, which previously Uan/Adapa [...] had built, had become dilapidated. I pulled them down and on 2nd Nisannu, year 110 (Seleucid Era), for the sake of the life of Antiochus, king of the lands, my lord, I widened their ancient foundations and I applied gypsum to them. I built and completed the interior. I brought cedars from Maḥdaru², the mighty mountain, and I roofed the shrines with them. I installed strong cedar doors at the gates of their cellas.¹⁷

¹⁵ Pedde 1991, 1995; Petrie 2002: 104-5; Baker 2013: 52-6. Pedde, followed by Baker, speculates that the tumuli may include those of Anu-uballit/Nikarchos and Anu-uballit-Kephalon (on whom see below).

¹⁶ Editions: Falkenstein 1941: 6–7, with corrections in Van Dijk 1962: 47. Discussions: Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993: 150–5; Clancier 2011: 759. Where vowels are indicated, they are retained here even where the case appears to be incorrect.

¹⁷ The exact meaning of this title, literally “chief of those of the head of the city” is still debated, but the use of *ša rēš āli* elsewhere in temple contexts suggests that it combines elements of civic and cultic administration (Joannès 1988; Beaulieu 1995: 90).

Like the Astronomical Diaries and Chronicles, this inscription explicitly acknowledges its contemporary imperial world. Anu-uballiṭ's Greek name, Kephalon; the dedication of the building work to the Seleucid king Antiochus (III), "king of the lands",¹⁸ and the use of the Seleucid calendar leave no doubt that we are in the Seleucid empire. At the same time, however, the use of the Akkadian language, and the highly traditional format and phraseology, which mirror those used in inscriptions of earlier Assyrian and Babylonian kings, situate Seleucid rule within an almost timeless Mesopotamian imperial landscape. For instance, the claim to be restoring an ancient structure that had fallen into disrepair is a standard trope of Mesopotamian royal building inscriptions, reflecting both practical exigencies (mud-brick structures degrade quickly) and rulers' desire to elevate their own status by presenting their work as continuing or surpassing the deeds of former kings. Thus, Nabopolassar (r. 625–605 BC) restored 'the ziggurat of Babylon, which before my time had become dilapidated and fallen into ruin', while Nabonidus (r. 556–539 BC) restored the temple of the sun god in Sippar 'on top of the foundations of Narām-Sîn, a former king'.¹⁹ The use of similar rhetoric assimilates Anu-uballiṭ and his royal patron/dedicatee to generations of previous Mesopotamian rulers and their representatives.

The topos of bringing high-status commodities – in Anu-uballiṭ's case cedar wood – from elsewhere also recalls the building inscriptions of Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings, which regularly boast about the bringing of resources from far-flung regions to beautify the temples and palaces of the heartland. For example, an inscription of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (r. 680–669 BC) records: 'I roofed it [the temple] with beams of cedar (and) cypress, grown on Mount Sirāra (and) Mount Lebanon, whose fragrance is sweet',²⁰ while Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562 BC) proclaims that 'for the roofing of [the sanctuary] Ekua, I sought the best of my cedars which I had brought from Lebanon, the pure mountain forest'.²¹

¹⁸ It might be objected that the use of this title – introduced under the Persians and equivalent to the earlier Akkadian universalising royal title 'king of the four quarters' (*šar kibrāt erbetti*) – was by this period 'purely traditional' and does not reflect any specific reference to a wider imperial context. It is ultimately impossible to prove the opposite, but without further evidence this seems an overly cynical reading; see below for a further reason why this title may have appealed to both dedicator and dedicatee.

¹⁹ Nabopolassar: Langdon 1912: 60, col. i. 23–35.; Nabonidus: Schaudig 2001: no. 2.4, l.18–19.

²⁰ Leichty 2011: no. 57, vi. 6–10.

²¹ Langdon 1912: 126, col. iii. l.

Anu-uballiṭ's claim to have brought cedars from the "mighty mountain" Maḥdaru²² to adorn Anu's temple continues this long-standing *topos*, contributing to the impression that Anu-uballiṭ's activities, and by implication the imperial framework within which they occur, represent a continuation of traditional Mesopotamian practice. Moreover, the center-periphery model implicit in the bringing of this material to Uruk, together with the lack of geographical specificity in Antiochus' title "king of the lands", gives rise to the impression that Babylonia, and indeed Uruk itself, are at the center of "the lands" over which Antiochus rules.

Uruk is also at the center of the identity which Anu-uballiṭ constructs for himself, which is culturally complex, but does not assimilate him to a multicultural imperial elite. Although he advertises the fact that he has a Greek name (whatever its social or cultural connotations), there is no sense of a broader regional or transregional imperial community. Anu-uballiṭ's status as a Seleucid subject is expressed through a direct vertical link to the king, 'my lord' (l. 11) rather than through horizontal connections with those of similar status elsewhere. He anchors himself within the local temple hierarchy of Uruk, as the son of Anu-balāssu-iqbi and head of the temple clergy.

This is not, however, a parochial or modest move. If the reading of line 7 is correct, the builder of the Rēš whose work Anu-uballiṭ claims to be restoring is none other than Uan/Adapa (Berossos's Oannes), the first of the seven sages who according to Mesopotamian mythology brought wisdom and civilization to mankind before the Flood. By presenting Adapa as the original builder of the sanctuary, Anu-uballiṭ retrojects his city's high status to antediluvian times and links his temple and himself to the most important figure of Mesopotamian wisdom. The Seleucid era by which the inscription is dated may have only begun 110 years previously, but Anu-uballiṭ's cultic and scholarly identity reaches back to the beginning of history itself, neatly subsuming Seleucid rule as a mere moment within the *longue durée* of Mesopotamian history.

The mention of Uan/Adapa may also be significant for another reason. In various cuneiform texts, one of which we will examine later, the sage Adapa is presented as advisor to an antediluvian Mesopotamian king, usually king Alulim (Akk. *Ayyālu*) of Eridu, but sometimes

²² The place to which this toponym refers is uncertain (the reading of the cuneiform is not secure), but the "mighty mountain" is clearly not local to the flat, alluvial regions of southern Babylonia. Given that the wood is cedar, if the claim is historical it is likely that somewhere in Syria-Palestine is meant.

Enmerkar of Uruk.²³ By casting himself as in some sense Adapa's successor, Anu-uballiṭ may be hinting that he should occupy a similar position vis-à-vis the current rulers: the message seems to be that Anu-uballiṭ, and by implication the other members of Uruk's temple elite, are the latest in a long line of priests and scholars who have always protected Uruk's cult and provided advice to its kings, whoever those kings were – just like Berossos's model of the Chaldeans, who guard the kingship of Babylon for all comers.²⁴ Like the other traditional elements in the inscription, the suggestion of unbroken continuity from antediluvian days to the present glosses over the political and cultural caesuras in Babylonia's recent imperial history. Setting aside the Greek names, it effectively allows Anu-uballiṭ to present himself as a typical Mesopotamian priest/scholar serving a typical Mesopotamian ruler.

This type of deeply historicizing localism, with its emphasis on local history and continuity, arguably plays a role performed in other imperial contexts by ideologies which assimilate the local to the imperial. It elides cultural and ethnic differences (but in this case, between different rulers and empires, rather than between different subjects), naturalizes the current imperial order, and enables local elites to present themselves as part of an aristocratic community which transcends their contemporary local context. The difference vis-à-vis cosmopolitan ideologies which emphasize a transregional elite identity is that in this case the aristocratic community in question extends not across space, but back through time.

Royal advisors and local guardians: the Uruk List of Kings and Sages

We see the same construction of a locally focused yet transhistorical identity for both empire and elite in scholarly cuneiform tablets from Hellenistic Uruk. One such is the so-called "List of Kings and Sages".²⁵ This composition survives on a cuneiform tablet inscribed during the reign of Antiochus IV (165 BC) by one Anu-bēlšunu son of Nidinti-Anu, a lamentation priest of the Rēš temple (where the tablet was found). The text consists of a list which pairs each king of Mesopotamia with an advisor: a sage (*apkallu*) for rulers of the antediluvian period, and a scholar (*ummānu*) for rulers after the flood. Uan/Adapa appears as advisor to the first antediluvian king, Ayyalu, and after him a (selective) sequence of rulers and sages/scholars leads down through the second and first millennia BC:

²³ Beaulieu 2003: 326–7, with references.

²⁴ Haubold, this volume.

²⁵ Edition and commentary: Van Dijk and Mayer 1980, Lenzi 2008.

Obverse

1. [ina] tarši Ayyālu šarri Uan apkallu
2. [ina tar]ši Alalgar šarri Udanduga apkallu

(entries for 5 more antediluvian kings)

8. [] ina palê Enmekar šarri Nungalpiriggal apkallu
9. [ša Ištar iš]tu šamê ana Eana ušēridu balag siparri
10. [] x^{meš}-šú uqnû ina šipir Ninagal
11. [] x^{kù}ki šubat ili amēlūti balagga ina maḥri Ani ukinnū
12. [ina tarši^{md}giš]-r^{gim}-maš 'šarri' Sîn-lēqi-unninni ummānu
13. [ina tarši I]bbi-Sîn šarri^midim-maḥ-^dmaš ummānu
14. [ina tarši Išbi]-Erra šarri Sidu šanīš Ellil-ibni ummānu
15. [ina tarši Abi]-ešuh šarri Šū-Gula u Taqīš-Gula ummānu
16. [ina tarši] šarri Esagil-kīn-apli ummānu

Reverse

1. [ina tarši] Adad-apla-iddina šarri Esagil-kīn-ubba ummānu
2. [ina tarši] Nabû-kudurri-ušur šarri Esagil-kīn-ubba ummānu
3. [ina tar]ši Aššur-aḥ-iddin šarri Aba-Ellil-dāri ummānu
4. [ša^{lu}]aḥ-la-MI-mu-ú iqabbû Aḥu'qari
5. [x]-IŠ Niqaqurušu
6. [tuppi] Anu-bēlšunu māri ša Nidinti-Anu mār Sîn-lēqi-unninni
7. 'kalû' Anu u Antu Urukāyu qāt ramānišu
8. [Uruk] Ayyāru u₄ 10-kam mu 1 me 47-kam Anti'ikusu šarru
9. pāliḥ Ani lā itabbalšu

- [In the] time of king Ayyalu: Uan was sage.
[In the] time of king Alalgar: Udanduga was sage.

(entries for 5 more antediluvian kings)

- ... in the reign of king Enmekar: Nungalpiriggal was sage,
[whom Ištar] sent down from heaven to Eana. A bronze balang-drum [...]
its ... lapis lazuli with Ninagal's work
... the dwelling of the god and mankind, they set up the balang-drum before Anu.
[In the time of] king [Gil]gameš: Sîn-lēqi-unninni was scholar.
[In the time of] king Ibbi-Sin, Kabtu-ili-Marduk was scholar.
[In the time of] king Išbi-Erra: Sidu, or Ellil-ibni, was scholar.
[In the time of] king [Abi]-Ešuh: Šū-Gula and Taqīš-Gula were scholars.
[In the time of] king []: Esagil-kīn-apli was scholar.

- [In the time of] king Adad-apla-iddina: Esagil-kīn-ubba was scholar.
[In the time of] king Nebuchadnezzar: Esagil-kīn-ubba was scholar.
[In the time of] king Esarhaddon: Aba-Ellil-dāri was scholar,
[whom] the Aramaeans call Aḥiqar.
[] x Nikarchos.
[Tablet] of Anu-bēlšunu, son of Nidinti-Anu, descendant of Sîn-lēqi-unninni, lamentation priest of Anu and Antu, Urukian. His own hand.
Uruk, the 10th day of Ayyaru (II), year 147, king Antiochus.
Whoever reveres Anu shall not carry it off.

The last fully-preserved entry in the list proper (rev. 3–5) relates to the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon (r. 681–669 BC), but the Greek name Nikarchos (transliterated into cuneiform as *Ni-qa-qu-ru-šu-ú*) appears in the final line before the colophon. Frustratingly, this line is broken, and no fully satisfactory restoration has been made for the missing signs, but the presence of a Greek name suggests a link to the Seleucid period. Several scholars have even identified the Nikarchos mentioned here with the Anu-uballit/Nikarchos who was governor of Uruk in the earlier third century, and who, like Anu-uballit/Kephalon, dedicated a building inscription at the Rēš “for the life of” the Seleucid rulers.²⁶ Whether or not this identification is correct, the mention of a Nikarchos shows that the composition engaged with the imperial present as well as the past. Moreover, as Alan Lenzi has demonstrated, several other features of the composition reflect a specifically Hellenistic context.²⁷

Three features in particular resonate with Anu-uballit/Kephalon’s inscription. First, we see again the construction of an identity for Uruk’s scholarly/priestly elite which is locally focused but temporally extensive. In constructing a scholarly genealogy which goes back to the antediluvian *apkallū*, the Uruk List, like Anu-uballit’s inscription, enables the current Urukean elite to view themselves as the ultimate heirs to the sages’ wisdom. Moreover, in this case the link between the scholars of past and present is more explicit and more fully articulated. The scholar who appears in the list as advisor to king Gilgamesh (obv. 12) is *Sîn-lēqi-unninni* – understood by first-millennium Mesopotamian scholars as the redactor of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and more importantly in this context, understood by the tablet’s copyist, Anu-bēlšunu, and the other lamentation priests of Seleucid Uruk, as their ancestor.²⁸

Second, the Uruk List constructs imperial identities for the Urukean elite in vertical rather than horizontal terms: just as Anu-uballit/Kephalon links himself directly to Antiochus, so the Uruk list matches each scholar directly with a king. This again sets up a transhistorical model for cooperation between kings and scholars. It also integrates all the rulers of Mesopotamia into a

²⁶ E.g., Van Dijk 1962: 52, Lenzi 2008: 163–5. Lenzi makes the intriguing suggestion that the text of the Uruk List was originally composed in the time of Nikarchos, and that his name was inserted into the list in order to praise and flatter him “in light of his king-like actions” (165). For the inscription of Anu-uballit/Nikarchos, see *YOS I* 52; Falkenstein 1941: 4–5.

²⁷ Lenzi 2008.

²⁸ Lenzi 2008: 162. On *Sîn-lēqi-unninni* and the Uruk scholarly family who claimed him as their ancestor, see Beaulieu 2000.

coherent sequence which at least in part elides ethnic difference: Assyrian and Babylonian rulers are treated side by side, with no distinction. The Uruk List suggests that Anu-bēlšunu and his colleagues are part of a Mesopotamian scholarly elite who have supported kings for as long as kings have existed. Again, we see the construction of a universalizing imperial framework which subsumes the Seleucids and of a royal/imperial elite which is “temporally” rather than “geographically” extensive.

Third, like Anu-uballit’s inscription, the Uruk List foregrounds Uruk and its scholars at the expense of a wider geographical and historical framework, or better, it molds these wider frameworks to put Uruk and its cult at the center. For instance, the longest entry in the list (obv. 8–11) is devoted to Nungalpiriggal, adviser to the Urukean king Enmerkar, who is the first postdiluvian sage and is said to have been “sent down from heaven to Eanna”, the temple of Ištar in Uruk. The following lines are fragmentary but mention the setting-up of the *balag* drum before Anu, whose cult enjoyed a revival at Uruk in the later first millennium and who, during the Seleucid period, was the head of the Urukean pantheon.²⁹ It was his temple that Anu-uballit and Anu-bēlšunu both served. As Lenzi remarks, the extended mention of Anu’s cult in such a prominent position within the list is unlikely to be coincidental and is probably designed to confer antiquity and authority on the contemporary cult and its devotees.³⁰ Moreover, as noted earlier, Anu-bēlšunu’s scholarly ancestor Sîn-lēqi-unninni, who is usually associated with the Kassite period (later second millennium BC), appears here in a prominent position as the first human *ummānu* and scholarly advisor to Gilgamesh. We have again a vision of past and present which places Uruk and its elite at the center of Mesopotamian history from Alulim/Ayyālu to Antiochus III, and in doing so assimilates Antiochus and his Seleucid predecessors to that Mesopotamian, or better Urukean, vision of history.

Local voices in the Hellenistic Greek world

Somewhat paradoxically, it is the localism evidenced by these Akkadian texts which enables us to align the Babylonian elites, and their relationships to the Seleucids, with local elites and imperial praxis in the Greek-speaking Hellenistic world. Because the Greek sources are so much more plentiful, our evidence for Hellenistic Greek experiences of empire and elite self-fashioning inevitably shows greater variety than the extant cuneiform sources. Yet it is possible to trace in

²⁹ On the rise of Anu and his cult at Uruk during the Late Babylonian period, see Beaulieu 1992, 1995b; Linssen 2004: 14-15.

³⁰ Lenzi 2008: 161.

the Greek material a parallel emphasis on local identities and elite self-perceptions which reach back through time rather than across space.

Various scholars have pointed to the importance of local historiography for Hellenistic poleis, not only in terms of their self-understanding but also as a means of negotiating political and diplomatic relationships with each other and with the imperial powers of the day. To take only a few examples, Angelos Chaniotis, Laura Boffo and Katherine Clarke have studied the cultural and political operations performed by historiographical inscriptions, which celebrated (or created) on stone a glorious past for communities with little political clout in the present.³¹ Clarke has also highlighted the way in which itinerant local historians might function as political ambassadors for their communities on the international stage.³² Within the domain of local historiography, John Dillery has singled out local sacred histories as an important medium of community self-definition and self-promotion.³³ As Dillery puts it, “local historiography was required to help cities define who they were and, further, to help them articulate their needs and aspirations in the wider context of the power dynamics of the age.”³⁴ In the various types of local historiography that we find in the Hellenistic *poleis*, there are processes at work similar to those discernible in the Uruk texts: the wider geopolitical framework is ignored or refocused to center on the local context; the local elite look to the distant past to forge an identity for themselves and their community; and the realities of contemporary imperialism are muted, or molded to fit into this narrative of local pride and prestige. Two well-known inscriptions, from communities with differing relationships to Hellenistic imperial powers, will serve to illustrate these points.

Local pride on the western edge of the Seleucid empire

The first example is the so-called ‘Pride of Halicarnassus’ inscription.³⁵ Erected probably in the second century BC, when the city was part of the Seleucid empire, this verse inscription gives a

³¹ Chaniotis 1988, Boffo 1988, Clarke 2008: ch. 6.

³² Clarke 2005.

³³ Dillery 2005.

³⁴ Dillery 2005: 521.

³⁵ *Editio princeps* and commentary: Isager 1998; revised editions and commentary: Lloyd-Jones 1999a and 1999b; selected literary and historical discussions: Isager and Pedersen 2004, Gagné 2006, Bremmer 2009, Bremmer 2013.

proud enumeration of Halicarnassus's contributions to politics, culture and literature from the earliest times. The poem begins (ll. 1–4) with an address to the local manifestation of Aphrodite, asking her: “What is it that confers honour on Halicarnassus? For I have not heard.”³⁶ It then proceeds to catalogue the famous men Halicarnassus has “brought forth”, beginning with the “earth-born men” who supposedly hid the infant Zeus nearby to save him from Kronos (ll. 4–14). The second half of the inscription is a catalogue of famous Halicarnassian writers, from Herodotus to the Hellenistic poet Timocrates; this part of the poem explicitly states that “infinite time will never cease recounting all the proofs of their fame” (ll. 55–6).

Although this inscription belongs to a very different cultural, literary and epigraphic tradition from that of the Babylonian examples, there are important structural similarities. We see the Halicarnassians constructing an identity for themselves and their city which relies not on their status as part of a contemporary empire, but on their membership of an ancient community which is presented as always having played a starring role on the world stage. As in Uruk, we see the local priestly elite reaching back to the distant past for prestige. Just as Anu-uballit and the Sîn-lēqi-unninni family linked themselves to the primeval sage Adapa, the Halicarnassian elite claim the glory of having hidden the infant Zeus from his father. This retrojects into the mythical past the high status of Halicarnassus and its local cult of Gaia. The foundation narratives and catalogue of authors then provide a series of stepping stones by which the Halicarnassians trace their importance down to the present day – parallel to the list of sages and scholars from Uruk, where Urukean figures appear at key historical moments. Moreover, the twin focus on cultic and cultural achievements as a basis for the city's prestige parallels the evidence from Uruk, where Anu and Adapa, and their human followers, serve as joint sources of local prestige.

The Halicarnassian inscription also subordinates and reframes the wider geographical and historical framework in accordance with the local. Representatives of other localities are mentioned only as bringing settlers to Halicarnassus, giving the impression of a centripetal movement toward the city and making it the center of the world. This impression is achieved not only through the narrow geographical lens of the poem, but through the local appropriation of regional or Panhellenic motifs: Endymion is drawn in from neighbouring Heracleia under Latmos to become an early coloniser of Halicarnassus, and the city also becomes the setting of Zeus' nourishment by the Curetes.³⁷ As with Adapa at Uruk, various Greek communities laid

³⁶ τῆς Ἀλικαρῳάσσου τί τὸ τίμιον; οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε | ἔκλυον (ll. 3–4).

³⁷ Endymion: Bremmer 2009: 305–6; 2013: 69–70. Curetes and Zeus: Isager 1998: 12, Lloyd-Jones 1999a: 4–5; Bremmer 2009: 294–7; Bremmer 2013: 59–62.

claim to the legend of the Curetes;³⁸ the relocating of Zeus' infant adventures to the shrine of Gaia near Halicarnassus, which goes beyond existing Carian appropriation of the Curetes,³⁹ parallels Anu-uballiṭ's co-option of the Mesopotamian culture hero for his city.

So strong is the inscription's local focus that the immediate imperial context is not explicitly mentioned. Nonetheless, its presence can be felt in the construction of a paradigm of benefaction and reciprocity between the local community and the wider world: the inscription makes a claim for Halicarnassus's status and worth on the strength of honours received from the most powerful representatives of the divine and human worlds. Lines 13–14 stress the rewards that the local incarnation of the Curetes received from Zeus, with οὐδ' ἄχαριν, "not without recompense", placed emphatically at the beginning of line 13: even the gods honour Halicarnassus, and deservedly so. The last section (ll. 57–60) returns to this theme, this time on the mortal plane. Aphrodite states that the city has received many noble prizes for its naval prowess from the leaders of the Greeks', Ἑλλήνων ἡγεμόσιν, and the poem ends with the assertion that Halicarnassus can lay claim to the most glorious garlands (στεφάνοι) "thanks to her good deeds" (ἀγαθὰ ἔργα). This is the language of euergetism, so often deployed in Hellenistic political discourse between kings and cities, and although no contemporary benefactors are explicitly mentioned here, the implications are clear: Halicarnassus can hold her own even on the Panhellenic stage; she has always received due honors from the gods and the leaders of the Greeks, and whoever those leaders might be, this pattern of honor should continue. Like their Urukian contemporaries, then, the elite of Halicarnassus portray themselves in terms of a glorious local past rather than a multicultural imperial present – but the construction of that past can be seen to respond to the realities of contemporary imperialism.

Lindos, center of the oikoumenē

Like the inscription of Anu-uballiṭ, the second Greek example explicitly acknowledges the imperial present, but again shows us a local elite creating links with the past to enhance their prestige and status. This is the so-called "Lindian Chronicle", an inscription on a stele erected in 99 BC in the sanctuary of Athana Lindia (the local form of Athena) at Lindos on the island of Rhodes.⁴⁰ It is difficult to reconstruct the local mood at the time the inscription was created. On

³⁸ Isager 1998: 12; Lloyd-Jones 1999a: 4–5.

³⁹ Bremmer 2009: 297, 2013: 61.

⁴⁰ *I.Lindos* 2. First edition: Blinkenberg 1912. Other editions and commentaries: Blinkenberg 1915, 1941; Jacoby in *FGrH* 532; Chaniotis 1988 T13; Higbie 2003 (essentially following

the one hand, as Higbie and Dillery stress, Rhodes had effectively lost its independence; deteriorating relations with Rome after Pydna led to a decrease in political and economic power, and the island was now increasingly subordinate to its “ally”.⁴¹ On the other, Alain Bresson has emphasized that in 99 BC Rhodes was hardly in terminal decline; the island enjoyed continued prosperity and still exercised considerable military clout; relations with Rome had improved, and Rhodes played a significant role in eastern Mediterranean affairs, albeit as Rome’s auxiliary.⁴² It is therefore hard to know whether the Chronicle is the product of a community feeling the loss of its autonomy and facing an uncertain future, or one with resurgent confidence. At all events, this inscription shows us the Lindians asserting the continued importance of their sanctuary and city in the world of late Hellenistic imperialism.

The inscription begins (A.1–12) with a decree ratifying the proposal of a certain Hagesitimos, from an elite local family whose members often held priestly office:

ἔδοξε μαστροῖς καὶ Λινδίο[ις· | Ἀ]γησίτιμος Τιμαχίδα Λ[ινδοπολίτας εἶπε· ἐπεὶ τὸ ἱερό]ν
 τᾶς Ἀθάνας τᾶς Λινδίας ἀρχαιότατόν τε καὶ ἐντιμό[τα]]τον ὑπάρχον πολλοῖς κ[αὶ καλοῖς
 ἀναθέμασι ἐκ παλαιοτ]άτων χρόνων κεκόσμηται διὰ τᾶν θεοῦ ἐπιφάνειαν, |συμβαίνει
 δὲ τῶν ἀνα[θεμάτων τούτων πολλὰ μετὰ τᾶν αὐτῶν ἐ]πιγραφᾶν διὰ τὸν χρόνον
 ἐφθάρθαι, τύχαι ἀγαθᾶι δεδόχθαι [μ]αστροῖς καὶ Λινδίοις κυρ[ωθέντος τοῦδε τοῦ
 ψαφίσματος ἐλέ]σθαι ἄνδρας δύο, τοῖ δὲ αἰρεθέντες κατασκευαζάντω στάλαν [λ]ίθου
 Λαρτίου καθ’ ἃ καὶ ὁ ἀρχ[ιτέκτων γράψῃ καὶ ἀναγραψάντ]ω εἰς αὐτὰν τότε τὸ ψάφισμα,
 ἀναγραψάντω δὲ ἕκ τε τᾶν [[ἐπ]ιστολᾶν καὶ τῶν χρηματ[ισμῶν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων
 μαρτυρί]ων ἃ καὶ ἦι ἀρμόζοντα περὶ τῶν ἀναθεμάτων καὶ τᾶς ἐπιφανείας [τ]ᾶς θε<ο>ῦ.⁴³

Blinkenberg’s text, with translation, but note the criticisms in Gabrielsen 2005 and Bresson 2006). Historical discussions: Higbie 2003; Dillery 2005: 514–19.

⁴¹ Higbie 2003: 204–42, Dillery 2015: 190.

⁴² Bresson 2006, esp. 532–4. Although Bresson’s argument about Rhodes’ continued vitality is persuasive, he perhaps gives insufficient space to Lindian localism. As he notes, “il s’agissait de montrer le rôle particulier de Lindos... et la contribution d’importance exceptionnelle de l’Athana de Lindos”; the specifically *Lindian* rather than cast to the Chronicle shows that the Lindians had a strong sense of their separate identity, and leaves space for some anxiety over lost status at Lindos (as opposed to Rhodes), as suggested by Higbie (2003: 242).

⁴³ *I.Lindos* A.1–8, with the restoration in line 4 from Bresson 2006: 539.

Resolved by the mastroi and the Lindians: Hagisitimos son of Timachos [citizen of Lindos, spoke: Since the sanctuary of Athana Lindia, which is both most ancient and most honored, has [from] the [earliest] times been adorned with many [beautiful offerings] because of the visible presence of the goddess, and since [many of these] offerings, together with their inscriptions, have been destroyed over time, with good fortune it has been resolved by the mastroi and Lindians [with the authorization of this decree] that two men are to be selected. These, after they have been selected, are to prepare a stele of Lartian stone, according to what the architect writes, and inscribe on it this decree, and they are also to inscribe, from the letters and the public documents, and other sources of evidence, whatever may be fitting concerning the offerings and the appearances of the goddess.

After the decree, there follows a long list of the offerings supposedly made by kings, heroes, and locals from the time of the city's foundation down to the Hellenistic period, including among others Menelaus, Amasis of Egypt, Alexander, and Ptolemy I. Each entry records the dedicant, the object, and any inscription on the object. It then cites written sources for the information, which include the works of various local historians and the letters of two priests of Athena, Gorgosthenes and Hieroboulos. The entry for Menelaus (B 62–9) is typical:

Μενέλαος κυνᾶν, ἐφ' ἧς ἐπεγέγραπτο· | «Μενέλας τᾶν Ἀλεξάνδρου», ὡς ἱστορεῖ Ξεναγόρας ἐν ταῖς ἁ τᾶς χρονικῆς συντάξις, Ἡγησίας | ἐν τῷ Ῥόδου ἐγκωμίῳ, Εὐδήμος ἐν τῷ Λινδία/κῶι Γόργων ἐν ταῖς ἁ τᾶν Περὶ Ῥόδου, Γοργοσθένης ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς, Ἱεροβούλος ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς.

Menelaos: a leather cap, on which had been inscribed: “Menelas, the (leather cap) of Alexander”, as Xenagoras records in the first book of his Annalistic Account, Hegesias in his Encomium of Rhodes, Eudemus in his Lindiaka, Gorgon in the first book of About Rhodes, Gorgosthenes in his letter, Hieroboulos in his letter.

The final part of the inscription describes several occasions on which Athana appeared miraculously to save the Lindians from impending disaster – in two cases from attacks by foreign dynasts; in the third from pollution caused by a suicide in the temple.

In terms of genre and style, the Lindian Chronicle presents us with a different document type again, but once again we can see a local elite telling a similar story. Both the offering list and epiphanies achieve a comparable effect to the Uruk documents. First, they construct a paradigm of royal or imperial behavior with strong contemporary resonance: Alexander, Ptolemy, and, by implication, their imperial successors are simply the latest in a long line of potentates who have

come to honor Athana Lindia, her sanctuary, and Lindos itself.⁴⁴ Second, they place Hellenistic imperialism within a historical and geographical framework which makes Lindos the center of the world: as Dillery remarks, “historical figures and their deeds are noted only when they intersect with the temple of Athena at Lindos”.⁴⁵ Just as in Babylonia, kings and heroes have come and gone, but Lindos, like Uruk, has always enjoyed center stage. Athana’s fame reaches not only through time but across space: the dedicants in the offering list, whose homelands are all duly recorded, include representatives of a wide range of localities. Phalaris from Sicily, Amasis of Egypt, the colonists of Cyrene: the roll-call of ethnics and gentilics spans and transcends the Greek world.

Like their counterparts at Uruk and Halicarnassus, the priestly elite of Lindos also emerge as the latest in a long line of guardians of their community. First, as we have seen, it was a member of the priesthood who proposed the creation of this inscription, which is designed to recover and transmit the community’s glorious past. Second, the letters of the priests Gorgosthenes and Hieroboulos are cited as evidence for the existence of many of the lost offerings, presenting the priesthood as privileged holders of local memory.⁴⁶ Third, the priests are Lindos’s advocates and protectors in the present, even after they have formally finished their service: the third epiphany recounts how, when Lindos is being besieged by another Hellenistic dynast, Athana appears to her retired priest, sending him to the *prytanis* to seek aid from Ptolemy I.⁴⁷ The inscription

⁴⁴ Reacting against the idea that the Chronicle is in essence a history of the sanctuary, Bresson (2006: 541-6) has suggested that the aim was simply to record all important offerings that were no longer visible. Yet as “important” implies, and as the decree explicitly states, this was a selective process: the compilers are to record “whatever is fitting” from the information at their disposal. The focus on royal or imperial behaviour in both the offering list *and* the epiphany narratives, as well as the geographical coverage, suggests a deliberate emphasis which it is hard not to relate to the contemporary context. For a recent restatement of the case for seeing the Chronicle as a work of local historiography, see now Dillery 2015: 183-192.

⁴⁵ Dillery 2005: 519.

⁴⁶ Gorgosthenes’s letter: *I.Lindos* 2 B 5–7, 13–14, 21–22, 35–36, 40–41, 52–53, 60–61, 66–67, 71–72, 76–77, 80–81, 85. Hieroboulos’ letter: *I.Lindos* 2 B 7, 14, 22, 36, 53, 61, 67, 72, 77, 81; C 53–5.

⁴⁷ *I.Lindos* 2 D 94.

implies that the Lindian priestly elite will continue their role as guardians of local memory and status, and that Lindos and its temple will continue to enjoy favour and benefactions from future rulers.

Localism: the view from the center

Did the stories these elite individuals and groups told about themselves matter beyond the local context? And to what extent did imperial rulers engage with, or respond to, these local narratives? There is some evidence that they did matter, and that in the Greek world and Babylonia, rulers and elites collaborated to create this discourse of localism.

To return to Babylonia, it is important to stress once again the one-sided nature and narrow geographical spread of the surviving sources. It is possible that if we had the Greek or Aramaic sources, our picture of both elite and imperial viewpoints in Hellenistic Babylonia would be very different; it would certainly be more nuanced and chronologically differentiated. Yet despite the patchiness of the cuneiform record, what survives suggests that Seleucid rulers encouraged and even participated in the writing of Seleucid imperialism into Babylonian local histories.

In the case of Uruk, the situation is admittedly somewhat ambiguous. Beyond the links that Anu-uballit/Kephalon and his earlier namesake claim with the royal court, we have only the tacit evidence that the Rēš temple was lavishly restored during the third century BC – although the huge scale of the restorations suggests royal investment, or at least support.⁴⁸ According to some scholars, the fact that the Uruk building inscriptions are in the name of local governors rather than the Seleucids themselves suggests a waning of royal interest in the city, and/or an attempt on the part of the elite to attract greater royal attention.⁴⁹ Yet it is equally possible to take a more positive reading and suggest that this reflects a deliberate Seleucid policy of encouraging local governance and autonomy.⁵⁰ The Seleucid king may have provided part or all of the funds, leaving the local elite to see to their correct cultic and ideological deployment.

⁴⁸ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993: 154-4, Baker 2013: 56-7.

⁴⁹ E.g., Beaulieu 1993: 50 (although he states on p. 48 that the building program was originally contemplated “with the tacit approval, if not active support” of the Seleucid house), Lenzi 2008: 157-8.

⁵⁰ Clancier 2011: 761.

The only surviving royal inscription from Mesopotamia which is in the name of the Seleucids supports this idea. This is the so-called Borsippa or Antiochus Cylinder, an Akkadian building inscription which records Antiochus I's restoration of the Ezida temple in the northern Babylonian city of Borsippa:

Antiochus, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Babylon, king of the lands, provider for Esagil and Ezida, foremost heir of Seleucus, the king, the Macedonian, king of Babylon, am I. When my heart prompted me to (re)build Esagil and Ezida, I moulded the bricks of Esagil and Ezida in the land of Hatti (Syria) with my pure hands, using the finest oil, and for the laying of the foundations of Esagil and Ezida I brought them. In the month Addaru, day 20, of year 43 (27 March 268 BC), I laid the foundations of Ezida, the true temple, the temple of Nabû which is in Borsippa. Nabû, supreme heir, wisest of the gods, the proud one, who is worthy of praise, firstborn son of Marduk, offspring of queen Erua who forms living creatures, look favourably (on me) and, at your supreme command, whose command is unalterable, may the overthrow of my enemy's land, the attainment of my ambition, (the ability) to stand in triumph over (my) foes, a just rule, a prosperous reign, years of happiness and the full enjoyment of great old age be a gift for the kingship of Antiochus and king Seleucus, his son, forever ... Nabû, supreme heir, upon your entry to Ezida, the true temple, may the good fortune of Antiochus, king of the lands, king Seleucus, his son, (and) Stratonice, his consort, the queen, may their good fortune be established by your mouth.⁵¹

The inscription attests to a collaboration between the Seleucid king and the priestly elite of Borsippa to project a locally centered image of empire, like that presented by the Urukian elite. Although it contains elements unique to the Seleucid vision of empire, the Antiochus Cylinder also aligns the Seleucids with previous Mesopotamian rulers, giving Antiochus traditional Mesopotamian royal titles, and presenting him as fulfilling the pious duties of a good Babylonian ruler. Moreover, it focuses on Antiochus's relationship with Borsippa and its temple (as well as the Esagil temple in Babylon) rather than Seleucid relations with Babylonia more generally. Just as Anu-uballit's inscription makes the southern city of Uruk the center, the Antiochus Cylinder portrays a Mesopotamian empire with Borsippa at its heart.

Thus, it may have suited both the Babylonian elites and their Seleucid rulers to construct imperial identities that drew connections across time rather than space, and which emphasized local particularity and autonomy rather than a broader sense of regional or imperial community. From the perspective of Babylonia's various local elites, this enabled them to present the empire on their own terms and even to gain a greater degree of independence and status vis-à-vis the elites of other cities. From the perspective of the Seleucids, encouraging localism, and hence reproducing cultural difference, may have been a way of reducing the risk of a united Babylonian

⁵¹ Rawlinson and Pinches 1884: No. 66 (=BM 36277). Editions and discussion: Weissbach 1911: 132–5, Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991, Beaulieu 2014, Kosmin 2014, Stevens 2014.

rebellion. As Clifford Ando has emphasized in a Roman context, the existence and maintenance of local diversity “contributed to the ability of the centre to distract conquered populations from realising solidarity with each other around their subjugation”.⁵² Insofar as the maintenance of local diversity reduced the need for cultural assimilation, it also contributed to restrict access to the (almost exclusively Greco-Macedonian) elite who occupied the highest levels of imperial administration, perpetuating a hierarchical division between imperial and local elites. We may therefore be seeing in the Hellenistic cuneiform sources not just the wishful thinking of a few priests, but the deliberate use of a primarily subordinative mode of elite integration which helped to naturalize Seleucid rule in Babylonia.

And not just in Babylonia. In the Greek world, too, Hellenistic kings acknowledged and encouraged communities’ emphasis on local identities, and collaborated in the process of assimilating the imperial present to the local past. The correspondence between Hellenistic kings (or their representatives) and Greek *poleis* provides various examples. One occurs in a letter from Zeuxis, Antiochus III’s representative in Asia Minor, to the citizens of Heracleia-under-Latmos, a small city in Caria which had known Persian domination, was subsequently ‘liberated’ by Alexander, and later came under Seleucid rule:

ἀνήνεγκαν τὸ ψήφισμα καθ’ ὃ ὤιεσθε δεῖν ἀνακεκομισμένων ἡμῶν τῶι βασιλεῖ τὴν πόλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπάρχουσαν τοῖς προγόνοις αὐτοῦ ... αἰρεθῆναι δὲ καὶ πρεσβευτὰς τοὺς ... παρακαλέσοντας τὰ τε ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλέων συγκεχωρημένα [συνδιατηρηθῆν]αι ... σπεύδοντες οὖν καὶ αὐτοὶ τὸν δῆμον εἰς τὴν ἐξ ἄ[ρ][χῆ]ς διάθεσιν ἀποκατασταθῆναι καὶ τὰ τε ἐπὶ τῶν προγόνων τοῦ βασιλέως [συγκεχ]ωρημένα συντηρηθῆναι αὐτῶι ... ἐπιχωροῦμεν δὲ ὑμῖν καὶ τὴν πανήγυριν ἀτελεῖ συντελεῖν ο[ὔ][τως ὡσπερ] καὶ πρότερον εἰώθειτε ἄγειν.⁵³

(Your ambassadors) handed over the decree according to which you thought it was necessary, after we recovered for the king the city that had originally belonged to his ancestors ... to elect ambassadors who ... should ask that the measures granted by the kings be preserved ... Since we too are eager that the *dēmos* be restored to its original situation, and that the concessions made by the ancestors of the king be preserved for it ... we grant you the right to conduct the festival exempt from taxes, [as] you were accustomed to before.

Here, the Heracleian ambassadors and the imperial representative work together, just like the Borsippian elite and Antiochus I, to portray the Seleucid present in terms of the local past. Both Antiochus’s rule over the city and the city’s status within the Seleucid empire are presented as a restoration of the Heracleians’ “original situation”, τὴν ἐξ ἄ[ρ][χῆ]ς διάθεσιν. It is not Heracleia’s

⁵² Ando 2010: 18.

⁵³ SEG 37.859 (excerpted); also edited in Ma 2003: 340–5.

membership of a contemporary Seleucid imperial structure, but the historical privileges it received from previous rulers, which Zeuxis and the Heracleians use to negotiate the city's present privileges. In so doing, both sides gloss over the awkward reality that the Heracleians' "original situation" did not involve Seleucid rule at all. Nor is this an isolated example. John Ma has shown how the creation of a "Seleucid past" for various cities in Asia Minor, visible to us in their correspondence with the kings, allowed both cities and Seleucid rulers to advance their own interests.⁵⁴ Periods of Ptolemaic control could be written out or referred to obliquely ('the kings' in the Heracleia inscription is likely to be deliberately vague), and, thanks to "local histories which presented an image of royal benevolence and civic gratitude in the form of *τιμὰι ἀξιόλογοι*", cities could claim benefactions and kings loyalty.⁵⁵

Conclusions

The documents brought together here are a select group, which represent the conceptions and self-presentation of a small set of elite individuals. Any conclusions drawn from them are inevitably restricted in scope, pending a more comprehensive investigation of elite self-presentation across the Hellenistic world. These documents are also in many ways heterogeneous, stemming from different cultural traditions and sociopolitical and intellectual contexts. Yet on a deeper level they can be seen to share similarities – in their localism, its articulations, and the ways in which it naturalizes or otherwise responds to contemporary imperialism. These similarities link the documents and their redactors even across cultural boundaries, and although on the basis of a few case studies they can only be suggestive, they are arguably significant. In the mountains of Asia Minor and the plains of Mesopotamia, Hellenistic local elites were telling the same kind of stories about themselves. These stories emphasized not the global but the local, and they reached out not across space but back through time. This enabled the elites of Halicarnassus, Lindos, Uruk, and Borsippa to present contemporary imperialism as a continuation of their glorious local history, and to identify themselves as heirs to those who had protected their cities since the beginning of time. These stories also seem to have mattered to their rulers, who collaborated with local elites in writing the imperial present into the local past.

Why should these local stories matter to us? First, because each one is part of the elite experience of empire in the Hellenistic period – part of the 'imperial subjectivities' which this volume sets out to explore. At the very least, they constitute a reminder that individuals might

⁵⁴ Ma 2003: 26–52.

⁵⁵ Ma 2003: 38.

forge specifically imperial identities not only by laying claim to membership of an empire-wide elite, but also by assimilating the imperial to the local in such a way as to sustain and enhance their own status and prestige. But if these stories are also part of a broader pattern, they might suggest that localism as an imperial ideology is particularly characteristic of the Hellenistic empires. In turn, this would imply that the cosmopolitan politics of these empires were characterized principally, or at least significantly, by the “subordinating mode” of elite integration. This would distinguish Hellenistic imperialism from that of imperial systems where the “assimilative mode” of elite integration was predominant, such as the Roman empire.

Of course, the difference is one of degree rather than kind. Subordinating practices did not cease when Rome absorbed the last of the Hellenistic kingdoms; as Myles Lavan shows, the ecumenical pronouncements of early imperial letters to the cities of the Greek east coexisted with exclusivist rhetoric which created boundaries between rulers and subjects.⁵⁶ So too, local elites under Rome continued to tell local stories and assert their identity in terms of the local past; Greek local historiography retained its vitality under the Principate.⁵⁷ Yet as Katherine Clarke observes, the most extensive evidence for this type of activity comes from the Hellenistic period.⁵⁸ Moreover, in the later Roman empire localism was increasingly matched by universalism, as citizenship and eventually senatorial membership expanded far beyond Rome and Italy. Elites across the empire came to view themselves – and were encouraged to do so – as part of a trans-regional, even “global” aristocracy, for which we see no equivalent in the Hellenistic period.⁵⁹

It is tempting to wonder whether the difference – if it is not simply a result of the distribution of the surviving evidence – might have something to do with the peculiar imperial superstructure of the Hellenistic world. In *On the Fortune of Alexander*, Plutarch lamented that “if the deity that sent down Alexander’s soul into this world of ours had not recalled him quickly, one law would govern all mankind, and they would all look toward one rule of justice as though toward a

⁵⁶ Lavan, this volume.

⁵⁷ E.g., Clarke 2005, Whitmarsh 2010.

⁵⁸ Clarke 2005: 122.

⁵⁹ Weisweiler, this volume.

common source of light”.⁶⁰ Plutarch’s point is to contrast those whom Alexander conquered with the rest of the world, which “remained without sunlight” (i.e. Greek law and culture).⁶¹ Yet his statement leads to an important consideration with regard to imperial ideologies and identities within the Hellenistic world. If Alexander had lived longer, there might have been a single Macedonian empire ruling large parts of Eurasia. Instead, his death resulted in an imperial space fragmented between competing dynasties from the same ethnic and cultural background, with diasporic Greco-Macedonian elites scattered across all the kingdoms. Without a true ‘world empire’, and with imperial boundaries constantly shifting, assimilative imperial ideologies which encouraged locals to view themselves as part of Hellenized “Seleucid” or “Ptolemaic” elites might have had limitations and pitfalls for both rulers and ruled. On the one hand, too much Hellenism might from a royal perspective be a dangerous thing, given the ideals of freedom and autonomy traditionally at the heart of “Greekness”. The discourse of Hellenism was used by both rulers and cities to negotiate imperial rule, but with no single kingdom controlling the whole of the Greek-speaking world, it could not function as a unifying marker of a single imperial culture as it did under Rome. On the other hand, for the elites of small poleis in the frontier zones which oscillated between Ptolemaic and Seleucid control, it was a safer strategy to gloss over the precise identity of “the kings” and emphasize past privilege. Identifying strongly as members of the imperial community which had “liberated” them today might invite reprisals from those who would “rescue” them tomorrow. As for the Urukian elite, whose ancestors had after all been local guardians and imperial advisors since before the Flood, they knew that the rule of the latest ‘kings of the lands’ would also come to an end, and that what we call the Seleucid period was really just another chapter in the long and glorious history of Uruk.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Classical journals follow *l’Année Philologique*. Assyriological abbreviations follow “Abbreviations for Assyriology”, *Educational Pages of the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative*, http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=abbreviations_for_assyriology, with the addition of:

AD = A. Sachs and H. Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia* (6 vols., 1988–2006). Wien.

⁶⁰ εἰ δὲ μὴ ταχέως ὁ δεῦρο καταπέμψας τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ψυχὴν ἀνεκαλέσατο δαίμων, εἷς ἂν νόμος ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους διωκεῖτο καὶ πρὸς ἕν δίκαιον ὡς πρὸς κοινὸν ἐπέβλεπον φῶς. Plut. *De Alex. mag.* 330d.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

BCHP = I. Finkel and R. J. van der Spek, *Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period* (forthcoming; preliminary online editions at Livius.org: <http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/chron00.html>).

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